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AMHERST COLLEGE

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*Alumni Reading and Study  
In Religion*

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RELIGION LEAFLETS

NUMBER 1.

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AMHERST  
MASSACHUSETTS

January 1924

## *Alumni Reading and Study*

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### THE AMHERST PLAN

In the belief that a college should serve its graduates by helping them to obtain the best available knowledge of whatever vitally interests them beyond the confines of their business or professional careers, Amherst College offers to its Alumni an opportunity to continue systematically, under the guidance of the College, studies begun during, or undertaken since, their undergraduate years. The means adopted for this service vary widely with the subject, the individual's desires, and the opportunity. Booklists with annotations, outlines of college courses, occasional bulletins, some personal correspondence, conferences at Amherst and elsewhere, are some of these ways. This is one of the publications through which Amherst College is placing its resources at the service of its Alumni.

“Terras Irradiant”

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THREE RECENT BOOKS ON  
RELIGIOUS THEMES

Recommended by

PROFESSOR JAMES GORDON GILKEY

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SMITH, HENRY PRESERVED. *Essays in Biblical Interpretation*. One of the "Amherst Books", published by Marshall Jones Company. 1921. \$2.50. A scholarly piece of work in which Amherst men may take just pride. The author reviews in thirteen chapters the long story of the way in which different generations have interpreted the Old Testament. He begins, naturally, with a discussion of the literary methods of ancient Hebrew writers, and ends with an exposition of the theory of our modern historical interpretation, as it has been developed by recent scholars. Two final chapters are added—the first on the survivals of primitive religion embedded in the existing Old Testament, and the second on the fanciful interpretations of the apocalyptic material of the Bible made by the literalists of many centuries. The book is packed with historical references and quotations from many sources, and will be of genuine interest to readers who have an adequate historical background and theological interest. Not a book for a young student, but a volume that will repay the careful reading of graduates who are seriously interested in the religious problems of today, and who have not yet understood the historical antecedents of the conservative interpretations of the Bible which are made by many of our contemporaries.

GENUNG, JOHN F. *The Life Indeed*. Another "Amherst Book", published by Marshall Jones Company. 1921. \$3.00. The manuscript of this book was found among the author's papers after his death. Professor John M. Tyler (whose excellent sketch of Professor Genung's life forms the preface to this volume) says "it is his last message, crystallized out of study, thought, and the experience of trial, struggle, and success." In this book Professor Genung gave his "review, in terms of common thinking of the Scripture history issuing in immortality". Here he traces with great detail the development of the idea of an immortal life as this development appears in the successive strata of the Bible. This evolution naturally culminates in the teaching and the experience of Jesus Himself, to which the author gives nearly a third of his long discussion. His interpretation of the resurrection of Jesus and the post-resurrection appearances will commend itself more to readers with a distinctly conservative point of view than to those who have followed sympathetically the recent trend of scholarly thought. The author's conception of the possible conditions of the future life, and his idea of the meaning of the atonement (with which the book closes) will also appeal more to men whose training was in an older school, and who are accustomed to think of such topics in the poetical and esthetic, rather than the strictly analytical and logical way. Many of the men who remember Professor Genung personally and derived great inspiration from him will be glad to renew their acquaintance with him in the pages of this full volume. Those who would



like to read a shorter and more brilliant discussion of this perennial topic, and one written with the attitudes and problems of present-day undergraduates particularly in mind, will find Dr. Fosdick's "The Assurance of Immortality" highly stimulating.

BALLANTINE, WILLIAM G. *The Young Man from Jerusalem*. Houghton Mifflin. 1921. \$1.00. Here is an extraordinarily helpful book to give to the boy (or the man) whose religious thinking is badly confused, and who wants to find how the leaders of modern liberalism are interpreting Christianity for our own age. Dr. Ballantine, at one time president of Oberlin and till recently head of the Biblical Department at Springfield College, here gives his concise interpretation of the essential teachings of Jesus, summarizing them under three fundamental ideas and four main principles. Each of the seven points is explained clearly, and its inner meaning brought out by the use of singularly apt illustrations and applications. This book has been among those required in the reading of this year's Freshman Bible course, and there have been many striking testimonies to its helpfulness in Freshman circles. One boy said enthusiastically it was "the best book he had ever read". It would form the basis for an excellent series of discussions in a Bible Class or a Church meeting. Not the least of its virtues are its brevity, its conciseness, and the vivid quality of its style.



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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN CHRISTIANITY

Recommendations by

PROFESSOR JAMES GORDON GILKEY

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Biblical Literature 1. This is a new course, given this year for the first time, and is listed as an elective for Juniors. It aims to give the forty men who have enrolled an appreciation of the long development which lies behind the Christian teaching and the Christian Church of the modern world, and an understanding of the aims and the problems of contemporary Christianity. The first semester considers the beginnings of Hebrew religion, its sudden development under the influence of the prophets, and its culmination in the teaching of Jesus. The second semester studies the development of the Christian Church from Paul's time to our own, pointing out the main events and movements in Church history. The third semester discusses the Christian convictions and the Christian Church of our own day, facing frankly such questions as the validity of our faith in God and the value of the Church in the modern social order. The following books are chosen from the required reading in this course as those which the Alumni will find particularly valuable.

WRIGHT, W. K. *A Student's Philosophy of Religion*. Macmillan. 1922. \$2.50. This volume, written by a college teacher of long experience, is generally admitted to be the best in its field. It gives excellent material on the history

of religion, and then suggests carefully-considered answers to the religious and philosophical questions students invariably ask. The material is well arranged, and the arguments are advanced in a singularly lucid way.

DICKEY, SAMUEL. *The Constructive Revolution of Jesus*. Doran. 1923. 6s. The author, formerly Professor of New Testament at McCormick Seminary, maintains that there was an "absolute contrast" between Jesus' ideas and those of His contemporaries, in almost every realm of thought. The Gospel material is studied from this angle, and the conclusions are unusually stimulating. Here is a splendid book to give to the boy who adopts the notion, common in many undergraduate circles, that Jesus had no originality, and that His contribution to human life and thought has been vastly overrated by enthusiastic admirers.

BROWN, W. A. *The Church in America*. Macmillan. 1922. \$2.00. Dr. Brown has enjoyed unusual opportunities for the study of American Protestantism, and in this volume states the problems of the modern church in a singularly lucid way. Here one can find the actual facts pertaining to such questions as the extent of church influence, the difficulty of recruiting men for the ministry, and the next steps toward church unity. This book can be highly recommended to laymen who are anxious to understand the real situation in which American Protestantism now finds itself. One alumnus is making the book the basis for the winter's study in his adult Bible class.

UNDERHILL, EVELYN. *The Life of the Spirit and the Life of Today*. Dutton. 1922. \$2.50. The author, one of the best known mystics of our time, gave the material in this book as a series of lectures at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1921. The book has attracted wide attention on both sides of the Atlantic, and deserves an extensive circle of readers. Something "mystical" undoubtedly lies at the heart of vital religion, and this book attempts to define, describe, and explain this "spiritual" element. The subject is a difficult one to handle, but the book is a masterpiece in this field. After all, if modern Christianity is to be something more than ethical philosophy plus a willingness to be helpful around the community, this third element in the religious life must be studied, understood, and developed in a normal and sensible way.



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# THE APPRECIATION OF THE BIBLE

Recommendations by

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English B is the Bible course which for some years has been required of all Freshmen. During the past two years the course has been greatly changed. It now aims to give the Freshmen an idea of the way in which each of the different parts of the Bible took shape, and an appreciation of the methods and the accredited results of modern Bible study. With this end in view, the lectures are divided equally between the Old Testament and the New, the emphasis in the first section of the course falling naturally on the prophets, and in the second section on the life and teaching of Jesus. The books listed below form a part of the required reading for the course, and are the ones that alumni would find most interesting.

PATTON, C. S. *Religion in the Thought of Today*. Macmillan. 1924. \$1.50. An excellent statement of the beliefs of a modernist about both the Old Testament and the New, and a defense of his readiness to accept both the evolutionary theory and the findings of

modern Biblical scholarship. An excellent book to give a boy who is trying to think himself through in religion.

LYMAN, EUGENE. *The Experience of God in Modern Life*. Scribner's. 1918. \$1.50. Written by an eminent Amherst graduate, this book promises to be of permanent help to many students who are puzzled about their own religious experience. Professor Lyman discusses what the modern experience of God is, and suggests clearly the points at which the life of God may well be thought to touch the life of man. A book which should be of practical value to any serious reader.

FOSDICK, H. E. *The Assurance of Immortality*. Macmillan. 1918. \$1.00. Contrary to popular supposition, one of the chief subjects for discussion among students is the possibility of life after death. Dr. Fosdick's widely-circulated volume suggests an intelligent approach to the problem, and states an individual answer and a personal conviction that have been of genuine value to many young men who are searching for a faith by which to live.